

3/16/09
GAE Testimony Submitted by Donna Marino
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**In Support of the Commission on Children & the Parent Trust Fund:
OPPOSE GOVERNOR's BILL 840**

- Over the past 10 years I have been involved with Parent Leadership Programs in Middletown which help parents become advocates and leaders for themselves their children, their families and their communities.
- These parent leadership training programs - Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE) and People Empowering People (PEP) -are currently funded through a collaboration of local grants, in-kind match and the Parent Trust Fund. PLTI and PSEE are family civic initiatives supported by **the Commission on Children.**
- PLTI, PEP & Parents SEE have a proven track record for involving parents and keeping them involved.
- **Remember parents are our children's first teachers and role models.**
- The opportunity for parents and children to learn together has been shown to increase academic achievement as well as the social and behavioral skills of the children.
- What better way is there to promote family literacy and lifelong learning than by bringing children and their parents together to share in the community learning process? All our parent leadership trainings offer intergenerational learning opportunities.
- The success of a parent has a direct correlation to the success of a child and to the entire family unit.
- The following success stories are representative of PLTI, PEP & Parent SEE graduates in Middletown and comparable in communities offering parent leadership training:

"Life Changing"- that is a quote used by the majority of our 150 PLTI, PEP and Parents SEE alumni when they talk about this program.

- Middletown parent leaders use the skills they learn in training to:
 - go back to work,
 - change careers,
 - finish high school,
 - go back to college,
 - become more involved in their children's school, and
 - become more involved in the community.
- Our 137 PLTI graduates new skills have empowered them to further their education, change careers, become involved in civic and school organizations as well as being elected to public office.

- 15 Alumni have become PTA officers,
- One Alum was elected to the Cromwell Board of Education,
- One alum has run for the East Hampton Board of Education
- Three held Board of Education Extern positions,
- 4 alums were legislative interns for the Commission on Children,
- Alums have created a fatherhood initiative in Middletown
- Alums are mentoring at-risk teens at our high school
- One alum recently advocated and qualified for a new home through Habitat for Humanity
- Two are pursuing a Child Development Associate (CDA),
- Two have finished their high school diplomas (one is a grandmother),
- Two alum recently received their Bachelors degree and are now pursuing Master level degrees
- Two alum are pursuing bachelor degrees in education and human resources
- Five have held office's in the Middletown School Association (MSA)
- Four alumni are/were CT Parent Power delegates,
- Three are members of the North End Action Team,
- Five alumni have served on the School Readiness Council,
- Two are on the Opportunity Knocks Early Childhood Health Initiative,
- One serves on Middletown Mayor's Citizens Advisory Committee,
- One graduate continues to advocate for the "Arts;" she received a grant from the Commission on Arts to produce a video on Diversity
- Many graduates have testified before the state legislature
- Graduates have raised funds for their schools
- Four are Foster Parents, and
- **Over 50,000 volunteer hours have been logged by PLTI alumni from 2000 to 2008; at \$10 per hour that would be \$500,000 in Middlesex County alone**
- **The Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) Projects impact:** "Going to College with Parents," "Building a Community," "Voting for Class Leaders," book discussions, role-play. Parent Feedback includes: "grasp onto a sensitivity and responsibility to others," "exposure and understanding of children from different backgrounds" and positive outcomes from parent and child sharing classroom experiences on similar topics.

To Sum Up

- PLTI, PEP and Parents SEE are currently funded through a collaboration of grants including the **Parent Trust Fund**.
- **Parent Trust dollars help local communities leverage dollars from other organizations/foundations.**
- Funding is needed from the Parent Trust Fund to continue to run these extremely successful programs.

I ask that you **oppose the Governor's Bill 840** which recommends elimination of the Commission on Children and the Parent Trust Fund.

Thank you.